

PLATFORM FOR REFLECTION ON CULTURAL POLITICS (PRPC)

The BIACS 2 fiasco ended up confirming all the conceptual and political risks that from this Platform we had been warning: the neutralization of the radical condition of the best works and artists that were presented; the banalization of practices of action, that ended up turning them into deactivated art objects; the interruption of the critical power of works that could only function on a precise information, which was not even provided; and the squandering of important financial resources and creative energies.

A failure that nobody -with the exception of this Platform-has evaluated: we still don't know the budget or investment made; the negative reviews in the country have not been taken into account; the fact that international critics and media have not paid the slightest attention has been concealed; the cancellation of many of the proposed activities and co-productions has been silenced; the damaging "collateral effects" that the enormous investment on the BIACS 2 has provoked on the cultural fabric that -with so much scarcity and difficulties- is trying to be woven in the city. A proof of this has been the dismantling of the Sevilla Center of the Arts (caS), that has come from a Center that took a stand, that proposed other ways of working, to become a container of leftovers (...), a domesticated space lacking any direction.

After the enormous and shameful odd job that became the presentation to the press and the opening of the BIACS 2 -let's recall the image of Enwezor mopping the floor-, the appointment of Peter Weibel as the third curator of the Biennial may be interpreted as the intent of the Foundation and the local institutions to bet again on a safe value. Hiring a veteran curator to trust the BIACS contents -as they already did with Harald Szeeman- with a distinguished but docile figure, capable of getting the immediate attention of media and critics, of simplifying discourses, of neutralizing opposition and antagonism with the event and securing a fourth edition of the Biennial at any cost.

Peter Weibel (Odessa, 1944) is an skilful curator, theoretician and expert on new media. He is the director of the ZKM -Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie- in Karlsruhe (Germany) since 1999. The first exhibition he organized for the ZKM, *net_condition*, became a referent for the history of net art. He has curated other exhibitions like *Making Things Public* or *Iconoclash*, together with Bruno Latour, *Inklusion: Exklusion* or *Das Bild nach dem letzten Bild* in collaboration with Kasper König.

With this background, the appointment of Peter Weibel arose a certain intellectual expectation. An expectation that vanished the day that Mr. Weibel presented his proposal, with one of its axis on creating the "Al Andalus" island on Second Life, a virtual universe created to satisfy the advertising needs of the global market that, as of today, is deserted and failed.

<http://www.google.es/search?q=deserted+second+life&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:es-ES:official&client=firefox-a>

Pedro G. Romero reported it on his *Hasty Notes On The BIACS 3 Presentation*:

We expected a consistent theoretician and we found a computer salesman that kept on repeating clichés about Al-Andalus... We went to see Peter Weibel, to hear his discourse, without suspecting that, as the proverb says, "if anything can go worse, no doubt all will take the wrong way..."

We, (the PRCP) had spent some hours discussing his work, from the left to the extreme right; his stand with Peter Sloterdijk against Critical Theory and the refutation of Adorno or Habermas legacy; his enthusiasm for the arts of technique, the consumer masses and the media (...); we had even contested Jean Clair's analysis in which he explains Weibel transition, from his early enthusiasm for the dirty eschatology -shit, sadomasochism, bestiality...- to the clean technology..., it was a total disappointment.

If Szeeman on the first Biennial -subtitled *The Joy of my Dreams*- went frivolously into a topical sevilian imaginary, it seems Weibel will embark on advertising a golden Andalusian past, with its techno-scientific, aesthetic and moral advances, but without any mention of the arab present of the city: the integration of immigrant communities from the Magreb, the harassment of the Islamic community under the shadow of the antiterrorist struggle, the censorship on the media, etc.

On the absence of a curatorial text to discuss, we can only base ourselves on what we heard that day and what we have read after in following statements, and from that we cannot extract more than a banal and stereotyped orientalist discourse together with a no less banal discourse on the goodness of progress and technology.

After seen all this, we are afraid that this third edition will face the same problems it had with the first curator on the first BIACS: theoretical inconsistency; servility, in exchange of fees, to promote subjects, artists and works supported by the local and regional institution; oportunistic undertaking of projects, comissions and gigs -Szeeman at PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Weibel in Gijón or at the MEIAC- that undermine the weak starting points; and shamelessness in exchanging soft jobs and prebends with curators from the local scene.

All signs point to the fact that the BIACS 3 is on its way to consolidate as another device for production of order, a device that, as defined by the philosopher and activist Santiago López Petit referring to the cultural Institution, will consist of:

- A device to privatize knowledge
- A device of urban space cleansing
- A cultural device that serves as a democratic alibi (create an image of social peace) in presence of the true social war that takes place in the neighbourhood...

Although neither the budgets of former editions are clear, nor the expenses of the next one are itemized, it is certain that the total investment made will be close to nine million euros, provided for the most part from public funds that are managed by a private Foundation of outstanding businessmen. Almost nine million euros assigned to consolidate a tool that serves the functions that according to Agamben every device must guarantee:

...to capture, direct, determine, intercept, model, control and assure the gestures, behaviours, opinions and discourses of living beings.

In effect, meanwhile institutional cultural action through BIACS is oriented in this direction, to buy wills and corrupt discourses, living experiences of political, social and cultural action like the squat center Casas Viejas in Sevilla are criminalized and eliminated. This undertaking against the ones who have less is founded on a neoliberal

cultural politics that devastates where there is less and sows among those who have more: let's point out that the City has handed over the former US consulate building to the MP Industrial Corporation to exhibit its MP contemporary art collection, a foundation to which the owner of the MP Industrial Corporation belongs.

Facing this reality it is necessary to react, the case is becoming very serious, because it is not only about demanding transparency, rationality on the managing of public funds and intellectual honesty; it is urgent to demand another cultural politics. A cultural politics that is ready to accept that there are many and diverse locations capable of generating new discourses, that recognizes the existence of heterogeneous spaces that transform, change and define new situations, that accepts that we need representations that confront with each other and allow to advance in the knowledge of the contemporary world.

Finally, as Nuria Enguita, the chief curator at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, points out, it's about demanding a cultural politics capable of enacting a rupture of consent as a mode of production of reality. Of creating new cultural devices that confront the distribution of what is given.

Another cultural politics that does not reduce its will and subjugate to the event, but is capable of acknowledging, empowering and expanding the nets in which creation is produced, that is capable of detecting the contexts themselves, of listening to them and develop from that a work of reconstitution of the place of art.

A cultural politics founded on two principles: *experimentation*, in the ways to produce, distribute, manage and present culture, as well as in empowering a field of action that allows crisis, debate and antagonistic alternance. And *transaction*, as a cooperative, open and horizontal work system, that strengthens the institution so it strengthens the art community -authors, artists and creators of the modern visual constructions- and the city's political life.

A cultural politics that rethinks and democratizes the institution, withdrawing from a hierarchical and authoritarian conception, opening spaces to new ways of doing in which citizens can have the leading role.

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